

REFERENCES

- ADAM, R.M. (1874): Additional notes on the birds of the Sambhar Lake and its vicinity. *Stray Feathers* 2: 337-341.
- ALI, S. & S.D. RIPLEY (1980): Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan, Vol. 2, 2nd edn. Oxford University Press, New Delhi. Pp. 323-325.
- CRAMP, S. & K.L. SIMMONS (1983): The Birds of the Western Palaearctic, Vol. III Waders to Gulls. Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 629-639.
- DEL HOYO, J., A. ELLIOT & J. SARGATAL (EDS.) (1996): Handbook of the Birds of the World, Vol. 3. Hoatzin to Auks. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. Pp. 532.
- ROBERTS, T.J. (1991): The Birds of Pakistan, Vol. 1. Oxford University Press, Karachi. Pp. 362-363.

15. POMPADOUR GREEN PIGEON *TRERON POMPADORA AFFINIS*
AND LARGE HAWK-CUCKOO *HIEROCOCCYX SPARVERIOIDES*
ON THE PALKONDA HILLS, PENINSULAR INDIA

We visited Talakona Reserve Forest (13° 49' N, 79° 13' E) along with members of the Bird Ringing Training Programme, organized by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), from August 27-29, 1999, led by the second author. We camped at the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department's Guest House Complex at the Siddeswaraswamy Temple. Talakona is c. 70 km northwest of Tirupati town in Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh, and situated past Bhakarapeta near Nerabylu village in the foothills of the Palkondas, in what are collectively known as the Eastern Ghats. The hills that lie between Nerabylu and Mogilipenta, which is on the northeastern side, have several peaks higher than 1,000 m in this part of the Palkonda Range. Talakona is in the midst of a sacred grove, some 5 sq. km in area, with Semi-Evergreen jungle, including several endemic tree species (Anon. 1996: 14, 20, but specified location of Talakona on page 20 is incorrect). We bird-watched along a narrow 3 km stretch of riparian forest on either side of a perennial stream, Bugga Vagu. This is a frequently used pilgrim route that proceeds eastward from the temple and leads to the Talakona, or Papanasanam waterfall. One walks almost parallel to the stream most of the way, on a path at least 20-25 m above the water level, and affords excellent views into the canopy of the trees that rise from the valley below.

Large Hawk-Cuckoo

Hierococcyx sparverioides Vigors

While we were returning from the waterfall on the morning of August 28, 1999, a hawk-like bird flew on to a bare branch of a tall tree (c. 30 m), at eye level. In flight, we suspected it was a brainfever bird *Hierococcyx varius* Vahl. But through the binoculars it turned out to be a large hawk-cuckoo *Hierococcyx sparverioides* Vigors! It looked slightly bigger than *H. varius*, and a yellow circle was clearly visible around its orangish eye. It had very prominent dark grey horizontal bars on its white belly and its tail was distinctly banded dirty brown and dark grey. This will be the second published record of *H. sparverioides* from what are known as the Eastern Ghats in Andhra Pradesh State. The first was by Ripley *et al.* (1988: 553), who recorded two immature females collected by them at Jyothimamidi "in disturbed forest" on the "Vizag Ghats" (that lie in the Northern Circars section of Andhra Pradesh, north of the Godavari river) on February 23 and 25, 1985 (see also Taher and Pittie, 1989: 14). However, if the biogeographical sub-areas of Ghorpadé (*in litt.* 22-ix-1999 and map, 1999: 4) are scientifically more correct, the 'true' Eastern Ghats occur only south of the Godavari and east of the Western Ghats: the "Vizag Hills" and others north of the Godavari being 'incompatible' with them, and belonging to what Ghorpadé terms the Central Highlands

sub-area, which later reveal a distinct Himalayan influence and domination of sal (*Shorea robusta*) jungle that is absent south of the Godavari (Legris and Meher-Homji 1977). This means that our sighting is actually the first ever record of the large hawk-cuckoo from the true Eastern Ghats ecosystem. The HANDBOOK (Ali and Ripley 1987) mentions wintering and passage records of *H. sparverioides* from Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala, indicating that this Himalayan-breeding cuckoo uses an easterly route to its wintering haunts on the Wynaad, Nilgiris, Palnis, and other highlands south to the erstwhile Travancore on the Western Ghats (Abdulali 1949: 1985: 210). The present record from the Palkonda Hills is the second from Andhra Pradesh, and confirms this easterly migratory route of the large hawk-cuckoo.

Pompadour Green-Pigeon

Treron pompadora affinis (Jerdon)

Also on August 28, about half way to the temple from the waterfall, we were walking under an unidentified *Ficus* tree in fruit, when B. Raha, one of the participants, looked up and said "Green-pigeon!" Some 3-4 birds were seen moving in the canopy directly overhead, giving us a brief glimpse of themselves between the foliage. Just before all of them flew away, we got a better view of one green-pigeon and noticed that it had a maroon back. We were then sure it was a Pompadour green-pigeon *Treron pompadora affinis* (Jerdon), but we needed at least one more sighting to confirm its identity positively. So we returned that very evening at 1700 hrs, but could see no green-pigeons on the same tree. After some time, we started back and then, near the temple, about 7-8 green-pigeons flew over us and settled in a tree on the edge of the road, close at hand. One landed on a bare branch, clearly visible to all of us. Thus, we identified them as a flock of Pompadour green-pigeons! Ali and Ripley (1987) reported the distribution of this species and its habitat as

"Western and southwestern India - the Western Ghats complex (including the Nilgiris, Palnis, and associated hill ranges) - from about 20° N southward through western Mysore (Malnaad) and Kerala. Affects forest and well-wooded country in evergreen and wet deciduous biotope; lowlands and up to *c.* 1200 m. altitude." Jerdon (1864) claimed to have "killed it in Central India, and in the Eastern Ghats" but gave no details of location or date! Sugathan (1983) reported that "One specimen of *T. pompadora* was ringed in 1969 at the BNHS ringing camp. Subsequently, two *pompadora* ... were ringed in April/December 1970," in Point Calimere Sanctuary, Thanjavur district, Tamil Nadu (Krishna Raju and Shekar 1971). It is significant that Point Calimere is just 48 km away from Sri Lanka, separated by the Palk Strait, where *T.p. pompadora* (Gmelin) is "Resident subject to local movements" (Ripley 1982). Unfortunately, the race of this green-pigeon was not noted in both these instances (*teste* Balachandran). Abdulali (1985), however, questioned several identifications of Sugathan (1983), but Hussain (1985), who was the project in-charge at Point Calimere, attempted to justify most of these 'bird-in-the-hand' determinations. Surprisingly, Hussain (1985) refers to Sugathan's '*T. pompadora*' as "*pompadora affinis*", stating that "its occurrence in Point Calimere is noteworthy." The second author has regular sight records of pompadour pigeons during winter (October to February) from Point Calimere between 1981-1987. He also has sight records of the green-pigeon [= pompadour green-pigeon] from Tirumala...at Papanasanam (regularly sighted in flocks of 20-40) during 1989. Two of our bird watcher colleagues, who have visited this area, were contacted for information on this species/subspecies. Krys Kazmierczak (*in litt.* 20-ix-1999) quoted from his Talakona diary of 10-ii-1993, "*Treron pompadora* 10." Bharat Bhushan (*in litt.* 20-ix-1999) also recorded the 'Pompadour pigeon' in the Eastern Ghats. He recalls seeing it "at

different occasions ... near Mamandur (13° 42' N, 79° 27' E, Andhra Pradesh, [A.P.]), and also in a permanent patch of the peninsular endemic red sanders tree (*Pterocarpus santalinus*) near Renigunta (13° 35' N, 79° 30' E, A.P.). Further to these records, the second author has a sight record from Auroville (Pondicherry), where he saw a bird on a banyan tree in July 1996. It was the same race that breeds in the Western Ghats, (Balachandran and Alagarrajan 1997). Priya Davidar of Pondicherry University (in litt. 14-x-1999), informed that she has “not seen the grey-fronted green pigeon here (in Pondicherry) nor have any of my students. However, there is no reason why it cannot be a straggler here if recorded in other areas along the east.”

This note is, therefore, a confirmation of Jerdon's purported first record of “*affinis*” from the Eastern Ghats, based upon positive identifications from Chittoor district and Pondicherry in Tamil Nadu State. The presence of *Treron pompadora* in Point Calimere is recorded, but details about race are lacking, preventing us from ascertaining whether the birds are *affinis*, or the nominate *pompadora* that is believed to be endemic to Sri Lanka. Further observations will clarify this matter in the Point Calimere region. The presence of this predominantly Western Ghats species or

subspecies (known from 20° N near Mumbai to the Ashambu Hills in south Kerala and Tamil Nadu), on the Eastern Ghats, is significant, as it reinforces the “vicariance” model propounded by Ripley *et al.* (1988) — that these present-day peninsular rain forest ‘relicts’ are those now stranded in surviving, humid, forested refuges, associated with the rain-capturing scarps, on the eastern hill ranges (see also Daniel *et al.* 1986, for an endemic gecko of peninsular India, also rediscovered on the hills near the Tirumala temple).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Kumar Ghorpadé for reviewing the manuscript and for suggestions for improving this paper, and also Krys Kazmierczak, Bharat Bhushan and Priya Davidar for responding promptly with their supporting information.

December 13, 1999 AASHEESH PITTIE
8-2-545 Road No 7,
Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500 034,
Andhra Pradesh, India.
S. BALACHANDRAN
Bombay Natural History Society,
Hornbill House, S.B. Singh Road,
Mumbai 400 023, Maharashtra, India.

REFERENCES

- ABDULALI, H. (1949): Some peculiarities of avifaunal distribution in peninsular India. *Proc. natl. Inst. Sci. India*. 15(8): 387-393, 5 maps.
- ABDULALI, H. (1985): Comments on “Some interesting aspects of the avifauna of the Point Calimere Sanctuary, Thanjavur Dist., Tamil Nadu by R. Sugathan (*JBNHS* 79, pp. 567-75, 1983)”. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 82(1): 209-210.
- ALI, SÁLIM & S.D. RIPLEY (1987): Compact Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan. 2nd Edn. Oxford University Press, Delhi.
- ANON. (1996): Sacred and Protected Groves of Andhra Pradesh. World Wide Fund for Nature-India Andhra Pradesh State Office. 96 pp, 3 Annex., 40 col. photographs.
- BALACHANDRAN, S. & S. ALAGARRAJAN (1997): Birds of Auroville — Final Report, Bombay Natural History Society, Bombay.
- DANIEL, J.C., B. BHUSHAN & A.G. SEKAR (1986): Rediscovery of the Golden Gecko *Calodactylodes aureus* (Beddome) in the Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 83(1): 15-16, 1 col. pl.
- GHORPADÉ, K. (1999): Letter from an insect-hunting ornithologist-21. *Pitta* 93: 3-4.
- HUSSAIN, S.A. (1985): Comments on Mr. Abdulali's note on Dr. Sugathan's paper on Avifauna of Point Calimere. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 82(1): 210-212.
- JERDON, T.C. (1864): The Birds of India: Being a Natural History of all the Birds known to inhabit Continental

- India; with descriptions of the Species, Genera, Families, Tribes, and Orders, and a brief notice of such Families as are not found in India. Making it a Manual of Ornithology Specially adapted for India. Published by the author. 2 (2): 450-451.
- KRISHNA RAJU, K.S.R. & P.B. SHEKAR (1971): Some interesting bird records from Point Calimere. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 68(2): 457-459.
- LEGRIS, P. & V.M. MEHER-HOMJI (1977): Phytogeographic outlines of the hill range of peninsular India. *Tropical Ecology* 18(1): 10-24.
- RIPLEY, S.D. (1982): A Synopsis of the Birds of India and Pakistan together with those of Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. 2nd Edn. Bombay Natural History Society, Bombay. Pp. xxvi+653. 1 map.
- RIPLEY, S.D., B.M. BEEHLER & K.S.R. KRISHNA RAJU (1988): Birds of the Visakhapatnam Ghats, Andhra Pradesh. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 84(3): 540-559 & 85(1): 90-107.
- SUGATHAN, R. (1983): Some interesting aspects of the avifauna of the Point Calimere Sanctuary, Thanjavur District, Tamil Nadu. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 79(3): 567-575.
- TAHER, S.A. & A. PITTIE (1989): A Checklist of Birds of Andhra Pradesh. Published by the authors, Hyderabad, ix+39 pp.

16. EURASIAN EAGLE-OWL *BUBO BUBO TIBETANUS* BIANCHI
AT 2,100 M IN NORTH SIKKIM

On March 3, 1995 while on a visit to North Sikkim, we met an old hunter who had a big owl skin. On inquiry, he said that he had found the bird electrocuted by a high-tension wire at Khedum (c. 2,100 m) in Lachung Valley about two and a half months earlier, i.e. around mid-December, 1994. It had the following measurements:

Wing length	: 480 mm
Bill (From feathers)	: 232 mm
(From base of skull)	: 48 mm
Tarsus length	: 72 mm
Tail length	: 300 mm
Length of unstretched skin laid flat	: 68 mm

Its overall colour is pale buff and black, with dark heavy streaks on the breast and finely vermiculated streaks on the abdomen. The toes are completely feathered, with feathers overhanging and concealing the base of the dark, slaty claws. Local people from Gangtok identified it as 'Pwongma' (Lepcha) and 'Koiralo' (Nepali) and as the owl that "eats cats", the last possibly being the tawny fish-owl *Ketupa flavipes*. The hunter reported that its mate was still in the area, but so far we have neither seen nor heard of more of these birds.

Of the four subspecies of *Bubo bubo* (Linn.) in the Indian subcontinent, *Bubo bubo bengalensis* is the darkest and most richly coloured, both *B.b. turcomanus* and *B.b. hemachalana* are paler, while *B.b. tibetanus* is browner.

According to the HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN (1983) by Ali and Ripley, *B.b. bengalensis* is resident throughout the Subcontinent from c. 1,500 m (and rarely c. 2,400 m) in the western Himalayas up to west-central Nepal "...possibly further east, but not yet recorded from Sikkim, Bhutan or NEFA..."

Both *B.b. turcomanus* and *B.b. hemachalana* are recorded from the western Himalayas (Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh) and extraliminally from northern Pakistan, northern Baluchistan, and western Tibet right up to Kazakhstan.

According to Vaurie (1965: 587) *B.b. tibetanus* has "...Range within our limits hypothetical..." though it "...probably also inhabits the eastern Himalayas at high altitudes..." Thus, it may occur in northern Sikkim and perhaps also North Bhutan and NEFA..."

Considering the length, measurements, colour and locality, the specimen appears to be the Eurasian eagle-owl *Bubo bubo tibetanus*